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ABSTRACT

This document was prepared for participants of the 1986 Invitational Conference for Boards of Education in Maryland. It contains three sections that present scenarios dealing with the following issues: staffing, interest group involvement, and secondary schools. Each section includes: (1) a definition or discussion of the issues currently surrounding the topic; (2) a scenario, set in 1995, suggesting one way in which some of these issues might be addressed; and (3) a set of questions that a school board or superintendent might ask to determine what is being done or might be done to address the topic. Scenarios are hypothetical "future histories" that help to focus attention on the details, consequences, or inconsistencies of a critical topic. Three tables are included. (LMI)

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SCENARIOS OF THREE CRITICAL ISSUES

by
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Developed for participants of the
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Introduction

This document was prepared for participants of the second annual Invitational Conference for Boards of Education in Maryland. The three topics to be addressed by the 1986 conference were selected from those discussed the previous year. Participants will draw on a variety of information sources to consider issues and alternatives for improvement for each topic. This document is one source of information. It contains three sections:

- Staffing
- Involvement
- Secondary Schools

Each section includes: (1) a definition or discussion of the issues currently surrounding the topic; (2) a scenario, set in 1995, suggesting one way in which some of these issues might be addressed; and (3) a set of questions that a school board or superintendent might ask in determining what is being done or might be done in relation to the topic.

Scenarios are hypothetical "future histories" that help to focus attention on the details, consequences, or inconsistencies of a critical topic. A scenario dramatizes possibilities, but does not definitively forecast a fixed future...since there is nothing so surprising as a surprise-free future.

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STAFFING

Jane M.E. Roberts

The Issues of Staffing

In 1975, we focused on student accountability: grades were down and competency-based education programs were introduced in an attempt to improve learning. In 1985, the spotlight was on teachers: quality of instruction was questionable and performance systems begun in the south spread to many states in an attempt to improve teaching. Also, national and state statistics "proved" that there were too few teachers, more who were ready to retire, and most who felt underpaid, burned out, and unsupported. For some time, attention has been given to instructional leadership: if principals were better, schools and teachers would be effective, and students would stay in school and succeed. Also, there has been some suggestion that if superintendents, central office staff, and schoolboards selected and managed school-based staff better, there would be fewer problems.

The issues of staffing include but are not limited to accountability. We are not faced with a simple question of who to blame, or which role groups should be better trained or rewarded, or how many college students should be given scholarships to persuade them into teaching. We are faced with a complex problem of organizing and supporting all educators in systems to ensure that the purposes of schools are achieved by people who feel competent and valued for making a difference for children.

A Single Staffing Scenario

It's 1995, and hard to believe I've been the staff development supervisor for this school system for seven years. Recently, I made a list of some problems and what we have done about them. The list went in the weekly PR column I do for the local newspaper, and I got a few letters and phone calls--not only from retired teachers asking to come back as coaches, but also from

some high school juniors wanting to try the work study program to help in their career planning. But I'm getting ahead of myself: Dr. James, our superintendent wants some of the items from that list so that he can share them with the members of his professional network next week. I'll offer him this:

- To foster professional growth of staff, access new ideas for the school district, and establish a pool of candidates for administrative positions:
  - participate in "locals on loan" to the state department for one-year contracts
  - encourage staff participation in assessment center activities
  - maintain an intern program for women and minorities to work on district priorities with experienced administrators for one semester plus the summer
  - participate in staff exchange programs with two districts very different from this one, with a college, and with two other professional organizations for specifically negotiated short-term projects.

- To alleviate the "teacher shortage":
  - increase salaries
  - reverse the problem from "How do we get more teachers?" to "How do we need fewer teachers?" and make changes in the system such as encouraging early graduation by giving college/apprenticeship vouchers to successful students until age 18.

- To keep informed of current issues and to address immediate problems:
  - maintain two hotlines, open two evenings a week, responding to teachers and administrators, and when appropriate, linking questioners to other individuals with useful solutions.

- To influence course requirements and course content of college graduate programs for administrators:
  - make explicit our expectations/criteria for administrative and supervisory positions
  - participate in the team (organized by the state-supported university's R&D center) to analyze alternatives and recommend content of college courses
  - accept candidates' participation in specific academies conducted by the state department or by professional associations as equivalent to (or better than) college courses.

- To select the best possible candidate for a vacant administrative or supervisory position:
  - clarify and publicize expectations and standards for the job
  - advertise widely, but promote internally when possible
  - screen applications through three levels, including an in-basket exercise, and panel or series of interviews so that the selection committee can make informed judgments.

- To maintain expertise and reduce isolation of the superintendent:
  - require (renewed) evidence of expertise in instructional models, curriculum development, at least one academic subject taught in school, and supervision; and expect demonstration of that expertise in at least one area each year (not as policy maker, but as contributor).

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Of course some of those activities aren't new, but it's useful to put them all together, and link staffing with curriculum. We did that when our long range planning survey challenged the idea that students were supposed to absorb a finite pool of academic knowledge: they wanted schools to attend more to thinking skills and coping with social change (like divorce, drugs, and teen pregnancy). We couldn't fit any more curricula into the schedule, which meant that we had to change the teachers instead of the program. We also guessed that we would have to make some organizational changes in communication, decision making, and coordination. One change we made in staff development was a switch from a traditional needs assessment to a task/problem analysis. Everyone let us know what was stopping them from solving a current problem, carrying out a task, or doing their jobs better. Then we let bids, like these:

Administrative and supervisory staff engaged in long range planning to improve all instructional programs need training in: - organizational theory - socio-technical systems - management of planned change	School teams engaged in school improvement need skills in: - communications and conflict, resolution - functional leadership - adult learning - supervisory feedback and coaching

Some bids were picked up by business/industry (at no cost to us), but others went to ASCD, NEA, other school systems, or our own people. We had a fight with the state department and the local college that first year, but when they realized we were serious, a few new courses were designed. (The college couldn't afford to lose our business.)

We tried to get form to follow function. For example, the middle school crisis of alienation and apathy scared us into incorporating counseling directly into our team teaching system. In some schools, a counselor joined

the team; in others, all teachers took appropriate courses; and in others, teachers and students got help through rap sessions run by a roving teacher on special assignment (TOSA). Integrated counseling was needed; staff training and assignment followed.

The TOSA system has been helpful. Teachers know they can rotate in only if a real function is addressed, and they know they can't stay for more than two years. But they like the (temporary) extra pay, the 10-month contract, and the opportunity to do something different. Often, it also serves as a stepping stone to an internship. The counselor TOSAs are full time, but the school-based coaches who help beginning teachers have a two-thirds regular teaching role, and their TOSA pay is proportionally less. Since TOSA money is not a salary increment, we aren't on a spiral of salaries. Yes, we raised base salaries, as everyone else did, but I think the thing that made the most difference in recruitment and retraining was working on the other kinds of rewards. Teachers are in the business to make a difference. They told us:

- "I'm not getting through to this child: I need to meet with his other teachers regularly to find out what works."
- "We can't cover everything in this text book: we need to decide on a common core curriculum, that we all promise to teach."
- "I have no ditto paper; Mrs. Jones has a closet full of recorders; we need a better way of getting the right supplies."
- "We did a school analysis. We know what needs to be fixed. Give us an inservice that shows us alternative solutions. Then leave us alone."

We listened. We reduced administrative distance. We introduced a modified version of differentiated supervision. We made staff development system-wide and school-based. Using backward mapping from a realistic ideal, we determined what needed to be done, then designed systems and provided appropriate training and support. We risked treating teachers as professionals.

Questions about Staffing

1. How do we maintain a pool of candidates for administrative and supervisory positions?

2. How do we determine the knowledge and skills needed by the various groups of employees in the school system?

3. How do we influence credentialing organizations to ensure that their courses and requirements match our needs?

4. How do we recruit and hire staff that can most competently meet our needs?

5. What opportunities do we provide for staff to explore career development opportunities, and/or expand their skills to meet evolving organizational needs?

6. Do all our instructional staff understand adult learning and leadership/management concepts, and effectively demonstrate appropriate behaviors in coaching, supervising, training, and planning?

7. To what extent are we engaged in staff development and organization development to help us accomplish the purposes of schooling as defined in this school system?

8. In the last 12 months, how did we invest in: curriculum development, staff development, organization/program development? Using backward mapping from two years in the future, how should we change our investments to accomplish our goal?

9. What critical tasks do we expect to carry out in the next five years? How can we hire and/or help staff to carry out those tasks?

10. What key elements would we like to include in our own 1995 staffing scenario? What do we have to do this year to get those elements in place?

INVOLVEMENT

Richard A. McCann

Involvement

In order to reach fair solutions to complex problems, we may need to expand key interests groups' involvement in education. Underlying the statement of this issue are these beliefs:

- Educational leaders are being faced with more and more complex problems. A complex problem is comprised of many sub-problems and issues. In arriving at solutions, social, organizational, and political constraints and capabilities need to be considered as well as technological ones.

- Any particular complex problem affects or is affected by multiple interest groups. These interest groups represent different or even antagonistic value systems. They frequently have special knowledge and command particular resources (e.g., material, symbolic, physical, positional, informational, skill). They also can have special relationships with each other which may affect how they respond to any proposed solution.

- Educational leaders need to involve those interest groups in both defining the problem and identifying solutions, if fair solutions are to be reached. Involvement can occur at any stage or step of a problem-solving process. Advocates of increased involvement tend to focus on early stages (problem formulation and generating alternatives) and on the latter stages (implementation, and monitoring and evaluating).

Scenario: Letter From a Retiring Superintendent to His Successor

June 1995

Dear Sarah:

I have made a habit of writing a letter to my successor, reflecting on some of the accomplishments of my tenure and suggesting some of the areas which need attention. This letter is particularly hard to write, as it will be my last, given the current mandatory retirement age.

I can recall my first days on the job as though they were yesterday. Our district was being bombarded on all sides:

- State task forces recommended a more rigorous curriculum. If I remember correctly, the call was for the infusion of thinking skills into all courses.

- State task forces recommended new systems for assessing and supporting beginning as well as tenured teachers.

- New state graduation requirements and the three-tiered system of diplomas were in place, resulting in numbers of angry parents and students.

- Parents pressed for more services: day care; supervised activities until five or six o'clock in the afternoon; free tutorial services; expanded programs for preventing drug abuse and teenage pregnancy; expanded career and vocational programs; job placement services; and more extensive counseling services for college-bound students.

- Business leaders complained about the quality of graduates. Though they were concerned about the skills of graduates, they talked most about the lack of good work habits and about student attitudes. They also praised their own corporate classrooms at our expense and a few suggested changes in funding, shifting the burden of schools on to parents' taxes: a ridiculous but fearful idea.

- National reports were being produced almost monthly. Some attacked the schools with sweeping indictments of mediocrity; others focused on our failure with specific students: the average, the poor, the handicapped, the immigrant, the minorities. And, they recommended changes in all aspects of schooling.

At the same time, we faced the reality of essentially no additional local and state resources (given inflation) and a rapid decline in federal resources, as Gramm-Rudman took effect.

The staffs' response was ambivalent. They appreciated the attention education was getting, but were deeply concerned about the broad attacks on their competence. They were confused by the mix of messages being provided about what the future should be. One set of recommendations and actions pressed schools to narrow their focus to academics. Another suggested that schools help students cope effectively with their problems, and develop the habits and dispositions which would enable them to become productive members of the community.

I spent my first four months on the job meeting people, exploring their experience of the district's schools, programs, staff, and students; listening to their concerns and proposals; identifying the assumptions which underlay

their ideas; and determining their interest in expending time and other resources in support of young people. I asked central office staff and principals to join me in this activity. I asked them to take time with anyone who came to see them, to explore in-depth the basis for their need or concern, to discuss assumptions, and to test interest.

During those early months, we developed a way to summarize what we heard, enabling us to identify themes and persons with common concerns and interests. We discovered that people not only wanted schools to improve current programs and services, but they also wanted to help in some concrete ways. We learned that they wanted school and district leadership, not to provide solutions and resources, but to facilitate and to encourage cooperative endeavors by all appropriate members of the school community concerned with young people and their education. This view of leadership was entirely different from the one for which I had been trained or had played in my previous positions. To describe it perhaps too baldly, I thought that the superintendent and his staff were "professionals," that they knew what the components of an effective education system were, that they would see that they were in place, and that the Board and public knew that, and that as problems arose, they would solve them.

Over the next five years, we tried several involvement strategies, two of which I'll mention here. First, we actively reached out to parents and to other community members who wanted to help students succeed. We also reached out to students. Each school developed its own unique pattern of involvement. Some used cooperative learning activities within classrooms, cross-age tutoring, one class adopting another, home visitations, home-school activity assignments, parenting seminars, a parent and senior citizen volunteer program, after-school

tutoring programs, evening hours for the school library, and community learning centers. Also, the role of committee resource coordinator was developed and institutionalized in each school. (The coordinator worked with business and community agencies to create community learning centers for school-related activities, coordinated all tutoring and volunteer activities, and helped the principal in parent out-reach and community sponsorship efforts.)

Our second strategy was to involve the community in clarifying the purposes of our schools and to begin to reconstruct them to serve those purposes more effectively. We initiated this strategy in the third year of my superintendency with a survey of all members of the community. We used the results to structure workshops in each school. In these workshops, teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members with like minds were asked to clarify what their priorities for school were and what experiences, conditions, and environments would be required to achieve them. From these alternatives, general proposals for "theme" schools were developed, setting forth purpose, structure, program, staffing, community resources and involvement, and indicators of success. The Board then authorized the development and implementation of a small number of theme schools.

Seven years later, we have five special purpose high schools (e.g., performing arts, science and technology, foreign language and international relations, classical academic, and human services), and three high schools have schools within a school. Our middle schools have extended 8½-hour days, with four core subjects (cf., language and learning; history and culture; mathematics and the sciences; and health and physical education) required of all students. And, our elementary schools have been organized as triads, each reflecting a different philosophy of child development and education. This

strategy has succeeded beyond my expectations. It has broken the rigid, bureaucratic, and rather oppressive structure which our district had become, stimulated extraordinary investment by all members of the staff and community to make their schools relevant and important to them, made the curriculum alive and meaningful, and developed a new commitment to learning.

Thus, I turn over to you a district which has a level of community and parent involvement which I believe is unequaled in the state, and possibly in the nation. More importantly, it is a type of involvement which is increasing resources for education and affecting the quality of instruction, school life, and district governance. The task you face is how to keep these processes alive and meaningful, given the tendency of all organizations to allow success to breed complacency, self-satisfaction, and reduced commitment. In a sense, I had it easy, beginning these new processes. May you succeed in sustaining their effectiveness.

Sincerely,

Skip

Questions about Involvement

1. Is our district being confronted with increasingly complex problems or issues?

2. To what extent do the planning and problem-solving processes which our district uses:

   - identify the major interest groups which will affect or be affected by a problem?
   - involve those interest groups in the process of defining the problem or issue?
   - involve those interest groups in the process of generating alternative courses of action?
   - involve those interest groups in the process of evaluating alternative courses of action?
   - involve those interest groups in the implementation of a selected course of action?
   - involve those interest groups in monitoring and evaluating the implementation effort and its effects?

3. To what extent do we consider the needs and interests of particular groups (from <u>their</u> perspective) in considering opportunities for involvement?

4. To what extent do our current involvement strategies results in increased human and material resources for educating our district's children and youth?

5. To what extent do our current involvement strategies result in an improved quality of instruction? school life? governance?

6. To what extent do our current involvement strategies affect the nature and level of student learning?

INVOLVEMENT

Alternative Perspectives

1. What needs do children have? Can schools respond to all those needs? Could schools respond to those needs if more money/support was available? Should they?

2. Which agencies provide services to children aged 5 to 18? Who are they? Where is there overlap? How are they coordinated? How are they paid for? How do school systems interact with them?

3. What key interest groups are in the school system? What business are they in? What do they perceive as rewarding? Could they earn those rewards by working with the school system? (e.g., Would a fast food chain feel rewarded if it was credited with paying for band uniforms?)

4. Children's development for society used to be a shared responsibility. If all the stakeholders became involved in education, what rewards would accrue? What are the punishments if it is not done? Who wins? Who might lose?

5. With transfers of children and staff from one school system to another, and the cost-effectiveness of shared ideas and concerted action, can school systems afford to be autonomous? In what ways might school systems best work together to a common purpose (e.g., building social support for education)?

Table 1

Educational Alternatives: Organization

Organizational Process	Organization Responsible	
	Present	Future
funding	federal, state, local	local, state, (federal), + gifts
decision-making	school board, professional staff	school board, community council, professional staff
influencing	parents, educational organizations, general community	general community, educational organizations, parents
staffing	professionals, aides, volunteers	professionals, pre K-17 + business 17-19

Table 2

Alternatives to Address Children's Needs

Children's Needs	Organization(s) Responsible	
	Present	Future
knowledge/academics	high investment-school varied-communications media	school (reduced investment) communications media (systematic)
appreciation/participation in the arts	low investment-school sporadic-museums, theatres, centers	museums, theatres, etc. school (reduced)
job preparation	low investment-school varied-business/school partnerships	business/school partnerships
process skills	high investment (basic)-school low investment (thinking, technical)-school	school, selected business, (all skill areas)
development for society	varied-school varied-religious, youth, community organizations	community/school cooperative
social development	high investment-school varied-other organizations	youth/community organizations (school coordination?)
coping with social change	v. low-school only in high need-other	social organization/ school network
dealing with human diversity	low-school v. low-other	new network

Table 3

Alternatives to Address Staff Needs

Staff Needs	Respondent	
	Present	Future
salary	school system (10 months)	school system (9) business (3)
colleagiality	professional associations school staff	school, associations, business partners
up-to-date knowledge/skills	curriculum guides, journals, inservice	new inservice, paid work in business/industry
specialized skills/knowledge	(rare)	"on-loan" staff from centers, business
flexibility, break from routine	(rare) school transfer	internships, day release apprenticeship

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Gretchen B. Rossman

Secondary Education--The Years Ahead

American ideals for secondary education are both comprehensive and idealistic. We want our high schools to develop, expand, and refine our children's cognitive skills. We also hope that our children will leave school prepared for productive work and a useful role in the country's economy. A third ideal is for students to be socialized to democratic processes and leave high school able to function effectively as citizens in a highly complex society. Finally, we hope that our high schools will develop personal talents, creative expression, and the capacity for independent thought. These ideals are comprehensive and we are unwilling to subscribe to only one or two at the cost of the others.

Some of these ideals are implicit in the recent work of the Task Force on Secondary Education with its comprehensive assessment of secondary education. One theme running through the recommendations of the Task Force is the need to foster independent decision-making in each child, in order to promote constructive participation in democratic processes and the capacity for life-long learning necessary for the future.

However, standing starkly against these ideals are the realities of American secondary education that few today can ignore. Despite our commitment to keep children in school until they are 18, national drop-out rates are approaching 30 percent. This means that nearly one-third of our teenagers find the educational experiences of high school useless and a waste of time. Furthermore, the anomie and boredom of many students have been well documented through research. Despite our ideals and intentions, the structures of American secondary education conspire to make attainment of these goals difficult at best, impossible at worst.

Several features of high schools contribute to restricting student development, treating students as an "undifferentiated mass" and often denying them their individuality. These include:

- organization hierarchy--power lies at the top of the organization with students clearly at the bottom
- class/grade organization--students are educated (processed) as batches in either classes or as grade-level groups
- size--the large size of most high schools fosters a redundancy of students and alienates them from central reward systems
- academic emphasis--current graduation requirements emphasize the academic to the exclusion of the other ideals of secondary education
- instructional styles--emphasis on rote learning, facts, and received knowledge.

Suppose we were to alter these features. Let us imagine a secondary educational experience that has done away with organizational hierarchy and age/grade groupings, with large size and an exclusive academic emphasis, with instruction emphasizing convergent thinking. Let us imagine an experience that celebrates the development of independent thinking, responsibility to one's self and the school as a community, and informed choice about an individualized education.

Scenario -- 1995

The large dining room was jammed with former and current students, master teachers Elizabeth had helped learn the ropes, assistant teachers to whom her work was legendary, various friends and well-wishers. Elizabeth was pleased to address them at this, her retirement dinner.

"Thank you, all. Thank you so much for coming. My recollections and reflections of a life as an educator span over five decades. How fortunate I feel that now, in 1995, we don't have to retire from active teaching until we are 75!

"As I think back over the years, contrary to the gerontologists' assertion that recent memory goes first, I find the last few years to be the most exciting, especially for our secondary schools. We finally stopped tinkering with them and made some sorely need profound changes in their basic organization that promote independence and collective responsibility. Let me tell you about a day in the life of my granddaughter, who is just now 19.

"From ninth through twelfth grades (when she was 14 to 17), she attended the local secondary school. She moved through those four years with a team of about 40 children. The team (which called itself the Yosemite Big Horns because of their interest in animal husbandry and conservancy) met each morning at 7:45 a.m. Their morning meeting was a time for sharing gripes and brags with one another, discussing the day's and week's events, and going through a highly sophisticated curriculum on coping skills and group processes. The team, aged 14 to 18, became quite adept at handling interpersonal relations with same-age kids, older ones, younger ones, and adults. They were led through this process by their four teachers--one master teacher, two regular teachers, and one assistant teacher. At the end of the morning meeting (about 9 a.m.), the team moved into Core Studies.

"The team broke into four main groups of about 10 kids, each with a teacher. The precise composition of the groups shifted over the course of the school year, as interests and needs changed. The four teachers got to know all the Big Horns quite well. Work was assigned individually or to two or three children, as their needs showed. Abbey said that she felt her teachers knew her better than any she'd ever had. And she never felt she had to keep up with someone else because everyone was working on pretty much different things.

"From 9 a.m. until noon the Big Horns stayed with their four core teachers, covering the three areas of required competence--language and learning skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening in English and a second language); citizenship and social relations (cultures, history, groups, government); and math, science, and technology (computation, the physical world). Each area was intergrated into the year's overall theme (two years ago it was exploring implications of the new bridge across the Chesapeake), broken down into sub-themes.

"After lunch, and some time to relax and chat, the children went off to different activities. Some went for language instruction, music ensembles, art studio work. Others went in groups of five or six to work in the nearby nursing home or the day-care center affiliated with the school. Some went to learn auto repair or retailing in local business. This was all coordinated by the core team teachers and relied on parent/citizen/elderly resident volunteers to help supervise the children, teach, or share experiences. I remember the delight in 1990 when we completed our first year of these activities sponsored by local business: we had been worried that he who paid the piper would want to call the tune, but overtime we learned collaborative decision-making. Local taxes pay for the basics and fast food pays for the band!

"A couple of afternoons a week, the Big Horns got together in their team room for a snack and chat about what was going on in their particular activity. After fifteen or twenty minutes, they were off to sports which ranged from the highly competitive swim team to aerobics, weight lifting, and jogging for fitness and recreation. By 5 p.m., children were collecting their bookbags and heading home, some with parents on their way home from work, others on the bus, others walking in clutches of two or three.

"During the afternoon electives, sports, and career development, the Big Horn teachers met together to plan, de-brief, discuss a child who seemed to be needy, or meet with their House Leader (like an Assistant Principal) to plan upcoming school-wide events. The school had a total of 600 children in it, 15 teams clustered into 5 homes, 60 teachers and nearly 30 volunteers in the school each afternoon on a regular basis.

"Instead of the traditional twelfth grade class, Abbey took courses at the community college for further education in ecology and conservation. She will attend one more year and then transfer to college. Once every couple of months, the Big Horns, current ones as well as graduates, all get together to talk about what they are doing. They seem to be making solid choices about work, more education, or just slowing down to explore alternatives for a while."

Elizabeth closed her remarks with a statement about how she felt inspired, knowing that the reins of responsibility for education were passing to a generation imbued with independent thinking skills, a sense of responsibility for their community, and the capacity to be life-long learners.

Questions about Secondary Schools

1. What if the secondary school mixed ages, relied on cross-age coaching/ teaching, and concentrated basic skills' study during several hours in the morning?

2. How could we structure learning experiences that responded to the needs and interests of the individual adolescent within the confines of required competencies?

3. How could we provide day-care for very young children at our secondary school sites and offer parenting skills training to our adolescents?

4. What if we extend the school day to match the working day of parents?

5. How are students taught problem-solving and decision-making skills and given opportunities to practice the skills in various contexts?

6. How do we deal with student alienation?

7. Do teachers coordinate their work across the disciplines as much as we would like?

8. Does each student believe there is at least one school-sponsored activity in which he or she can succeed and is valued for participating?

9. What guidance and assistance are available in sex education and parenting? Are these adequate?

10. What different scenarios would we like to see for high schools in our system 10 years from now? What might we do now to bring them about?